



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Taxes bring out voters, county says

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Voter turnout for Tuesday's city-school election exceeded expectations according to county officials. County Clerk Shelly Harms said the 43 percent voter turnout was high for a local election.

"The city-school election usually has about 20 percent turnout. People usually don't feel it's as important as a state or national election," she said. "It was higher than normal."

Harms said during the 2005 city and school election, the turnout was only 22 percent.

She attributed the higher percentage Tuesday to the Colby Community College wellness center proposal.

Her office had many new registrations and many people who hadn't voted in a decade or more re-registered.

"Taxpayers in Thomas County wanted to voice their opinion on the college question," she said. "It's obvious the voters pointed that out with their negative vote."

Voter turnout for the November 2006 general election was between 24 to 46 percent.

"That's pretty normal," Harms said.

Bond issues, like what the college asked for Tuesday, have brought out the voters in the past.

The Colby School District tried to pass a \$7.95 million bond issue for a new high school during a special election Feb. 2, 1993. The proposal failed then, but it went to another vote during the April 6 elec-

## Alzheimer's Memory Walk set for April 21

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Now in its fourth year, the Alzheimer's Memory Walk is scheduled at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 21, at Fike Park, said Rhonda Riedel, coordinator.

"This is a nine-county walk for the benefit of Thomas, Rawlins, Logan, Cheyenne, Sherman, Sheridan, Decatur, Wallace and Gove counties," she said.

"Our goal last year was \$6,000, but we ended up raising more than \$7,700," Riedel said. "We are hoping for the same or better this year."

The donations help the local Alzheimer's Association with an around-the-clock help-line, support groups, resource library, training for professional caregivers, research, educational programs for families and more.

Last year, Thomas County walkers raised the most money followed by Gove, Rawlins, Decatur, Logan and Cheyenne counties.

With more than 64,000 Kansans suffering from Alzheimer's, fund-raising events such as the Memory Walk make it possible for chapters across the state to continue to look for a cure, help the Alzheimer's patient and provide support to caregivers, Riedel said.

"Our chapter, which is one of the nationwide chapters established in 2003, is part of the Alzheimer's Association of the Great Plains," Riedel said. "We are a volunteer health organization providing support and assistance to patients and

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Shelly Harms,  
Thomas County  
Clerk

### Correction

A headline and picture cutline in Wednesday's Colby Free Press had inaccurate unofficial voter turnout information. Voter turnout was 43 percent.

The Colby Free Press wants to maintain an accurate record. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

tion. Turnout was 70 percent of eligible voters.

The bond amount on the second election was for less money — \$6,552,000, and passed. Voter turnout was 64 percent.

Staff started working on the election in December — calling poll workers, getting candidate names to the voting machine company and more.



FILE PHOTO

More than 20 people participated in last year's walk to raise money and awareness about Alzheimer's disease.

families affected by this disease."

"For those who know someone with Alzheimer's or families that could use a break from caring for the patient, Riedel encourages those people to call (785) 673-3149 or e-mail her at: thedepot@ruraltel.net.

Another option is the help-line, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling toll-free (800) 272-3900.

For those wanting to help by walking or donating, either call Riedel or Marsha Hills of Wichita in the central and western Kansas office at (800) 272-3900 or e-mail: marsha.hills@alz.org



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

The Colby High School band played at the recent state basketball championships. It was one of the band's many performances

throughout the school year. The band and school choir are headed to a Chicago festival April 12-15.

## Music students to play in Chicago

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Colby High School band and choir are headed to the Windy City Classic Festival in Chicago April 12-15.

High school vocal teacher Joey Nickols said the trip was his idea, but his wife, Jill, the high school band teacher, thought the best solution should be to take both music groups on one trip.

He asked for proposals from companies who arrange music trips, and received four. He set some limits on distance, but the seniors took the lead on the project, and he helped choose a

place most of them have never been.

Honolulu was the first choice, but because of air travel and cost, they settled on Chicago.

Nickols said he wanted the students to have the opportunity to see things beyond Kansas, and maybe get ideas about what they want to do.

Thirty-seven students are going to Chicago. Seven of the students are in both the band and choir.

The band has 42 members and 43 students are in the choir.

"They'll be doing a lot of sight-seeing," he said. "The company we're using keeps them busy from the second they get up to the second they go to bed."

The first day, the students will go to Sears Tower, the Navy Pier, shopping and a Blue Man Group concert. The group is a trio of three bald, blue-faced people who give a performance using music, percussion and science to entertain.

Saturday, April 14, they will perform at Linder Conference Center.

The band is slated to perform at 12:20 p.m. and the choir at 1:10 p.m.

They will have two hours to walk the Magnificent Mile on Michigan Avenue, followed by the festival awards banquet at Drury Lane. That night will also include the show "Something's Afoot," a Broadway-type musical.

The Windy City Music Festival

lasts three weekends, with about 8 bands and 10 choirs from around the country performing each weekend.

The music groups will perform in front of clinicians, who will then rate their performance. After that, both the musicians and their directors will work with the clinicians to refine and polish their performances.

"We do get a lot of time with the clinicians," Nickols said.

Though roughly half of each group is going to the festival, Nickols said they have prepared.

He has rehearsed with just the

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## Lack of primary spurs grumbling

TOPEKA (AP) — School districts could raise property taxes and Kansas wouldn't have a presidential primary next year under a \$12.3 billion spending bill that still is inspiring grumbling after going to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

The bill contains most of the state budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, and legislators felt obligated to pass it before taking their annual spring break.

But even some who voted for it think giving the 296 school districts more taxing authority is a mistake.

The measure also scuttled plans for a presidential primary in February 2008, leaving the Democratic and Republican parties to hold caucuses at their own expense to allo-

cate delegates to their national nominating conventions. The state estimated it would cost \$2 million to cover counties' costs from the special election, and the bill doesn't include any of the money.

Legislators of all stripes found plenty of reasons to grumble about the bill before it passed early Wednesday.

But House Republicans were pleased, saying the bill controlled spending and met the state's ongoing needs.

"I think when you review the session, we've had a pretty productive session," said House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls. "Overall, I think things went very well."

Passage of the budget bill al-

lowed legislators to begin their annual spring break. They plan to return April 25 to wrap up their business for the year.

Decisions are pending on dozens of other items, including a plan for dealing with a backlog of repairs on state university campuses, proposals for increased social services spending from Sebelius and aid for western Kansas to help it recover from winter storms.

State officials and university economists plan to meet April 16 to issue a new financial forecast for state government. Once legislators reconvene, they'll consider a final budget reconciliation bill.

When lawmakers finish, the budget for the next fiscal year will be

about \$12.4 billion. That's roughly the same amount as this year's budget, though there will be significant shifts in funding.

Aid to public schools will increase significantly, in keeping with a plan passed last year to end a lawsuit. Spending on highways, which fluctuates from year to year, will drop about 24 percent.

Some legislators already want to reconsider language in the budget bill they approved early Wednesday dealing with school districts' ability to supplement their state aid by raising property taxes.

Under a law enacted last year, a school board can finance a "local option budget" equal to 31 percent of its state aid.

## Going down

Cranes from Commercial Sign in Colby were in place Monday to bring down the press box at Dennen Field. The stands on the north side of the field have been dismantled to make way for a new stadium this summer.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press